

Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments
Appropriations Hearing
HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Thursday, February 24th, 2022
Sharon Stevenson

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Sharon Stevenson and I am a registered voter in city of Bridgeport.

If it wasn't for God, who helped me through my trials, I would be a mess. I also attend Bridge House, a psychiatric rehabilitation program in Bridgeport. Before Bridge House, I was homeless, sleeping outside on cardboard boxes and carrying guns on my person to protect myself. Bridge House helped me find housing. It has helped me to get along with people, to improve my self-esteem, to work in the program's Snack Bar, Food Pantry, Education area, serving lunch, participating in Advocacy events, ushering at the door (bringing guests in and showing them the room where they will be attending meetings or activities), and much more. I have also even sung at our holiday parties and open mic days. Because of Bridge House, I got a job working at the Bridgeport Public Schools (Blackham School), the YMCA in Westport, at Mental Health CT, and at AJ Wright clothing store.

I have a case manager at Bridge House by the name of William. He is an inspiration in my life. He guides me like a dad. He helps me with my papers and with doing the right thing. I have known him for 25 years.

I am the new Sharon—not the old Sharon. The old, homeless Sharon used to drink, smoke, carry guns and hang at the bars and gamble at the casinos.

I am Sharon—the new Sharon—the new creation. I no longer carry guns, I no longer drink, I am not homeless anymore, and I get along with people. I also now have a passion for helping people. I am thankful for Bridge House and all its services. Please increase funding to Bridge House and mental health programs like it.

Thank you for reading my testimony.